

Snack food maker buys High Point facility

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By Owen Covington

An Italian snack food maker has purchased a 68,000-square-foot building on Tyner Road [in High Point] that will become home to its first manufacturing facility in North America.

Le Caselle, based in Pontevico in northern Italy, bought the former Streuli Sales facility at 8221 Tyner Road for \$2.8 million in late August and hopes to begin production in the second quarter 2012. The facility will be operated by LC America, the name of Le Caselle's North American operations.

According to Stefano Cazzaniga, CEO of LC America, the production facility will employ 19 once it's operational, and 17 of those will be new hires. Le Caselle was formed in 1995 and employs about 40 people in its production facility in Pontevico.

The company has been looking in the area for close to two years, according to Kevin Kemp, broker with Triad Commercial Properties, who represented the buyer and seller in the transaction.

Cazzaniga said the company had considered different states for its first North American production facility before settling on the Piedmont Triad based in part on its location along the East Coast and its proximity to Piedmont Triad International Airport, Interstates 40 and 85, and North Carolina port terminals.

"This represents for Le Caselle the first strategic step in its internationalization process," Cazzaniga said.

The company produces snack pellets similar to dried pasta that are made of potato, cereals, vegetables or legumes. The pellets expand after being either fried or heated with hot air, and offer more flexibility and time savings for snack food producers, Cazzaniga said.

"This product allows us to develop different recipes according to nutritional needs that we are asked to satisfy," Cazzaniga said.

Le Caselle doesn't sell its products directly to consumers, but rather to snack food makers who cook them, season them and then package them under their own brands.

The company plans to start a three-shift production schedule with one production line, but anticipates expanding capacity within the Tyner Road building as the business grows, Cazzaniga said.

"The building we bought is large enough for a huge growth in order to permit our company to expand our presence in North America and to serve directly this market," Cazzaniga said.

The facility at 8221 Tyner Road was previously used by Streuli Sales to produce residential doors. The company ceased operations earlier this year, and the building had been vacant for several months before the sale, Kemp said.